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*Letter to Methodist Nonconformists,*

*Leeds, 1828.*

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A

**LETTER**

TO THE

METHODIST

**NONCONFORMISTS.**

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**"THE CRETAINS ARE ALWAYS LIARS." Paul.**

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**Leeds :**

PRINTED AND SOLD BY HENRY CULLINGWORTH, BRIDGE-END;  
SOLD ALSO BY HENRY SPINK, JOHN HEATON, JUN., BRIGGATE; AND  
JAMES KNIGHT, KIRKGATE.

—  
1828.

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A LETTER  
TO THE  
METHODIST NONCONFORMISTS.

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SIRS,

THE publication of the "Brief Statement," &c. issued from your first quarter day, has put the quietus on your own cause. I attend at this time to ring its funeral knell, and shall sustain the offices of *parson*, *clerk*, and *sexton*,—in my first character, I think we may safely commit it to the grave in "sure and certain hope," that it will have no resurrection, except to "shame and contempt,"—in my second, I heartily say, Amen,—and in my last, I here sound GONE,—GONE,—GONE.

When I read your last "Appeal" to the societies, I could not help thinking, indeed I was quite sure, it abounded with—(I might as well speak out, as you are matter of fact men, and love plain dealing,) misrepresentations and LIES; but when I read this stale and meager repetition of it, I saw it was full of them. And I could not but wonder, how the *grave* and *dignified* personage at your head would look, as lie after lie bolted forth, to which he was to require your solemn assent, knowing them to be such all the time.

Your first statement respecting the Leeds Society, being so "peaceable and prosperous," &c. may have been true, and would have continued so, had not a radical junto infested it, and formed a regular opposition, in which the characteristic names of Lord John Russel, Brougham, Tierney, &c. were arrogated by yourselves, or given in compliment to each other, but which I hope will now be changed for the more appropriate names of Cobbett, Hunt, Wooler, &c. A knot of worthies truly;—had you not thus brought matters to a premature crisis, the Leeds Society might have been shaken from the centre to the circumference. At present the Society is happily purged, or it would have served rather for a *beacon* than an *example*.

The repeated story of pledges that the "prayers" and an organ should not be introduced into Brunswick Chapel, I hereby pronounce to be false, and dare you to the proof of the contrary, and deny that any proof can be produced; this matter was fully sifted at the Special District Meeting, and

nothing but the greatest, and most desperate hardihood could have induced a repitition of what is here asserted. Mr. George Marsden you well know, had no authority to give assurances and pledges, and Mr. Marsden, as many of you heard at the District Meeting, positively denied that he had done so I heard him deny it, and I am sure Mr. M. Johnson, (Secretary of the New Conference) as well as many more of you, heard it too, as I saw you there. "O shame where is thy blush?" I answer, not on a Nonconformist's cheek. The statement that "Messrs. Bunting and Newton patronise the introduction of Organs and the Liturgy into the Methodist Chapels in order to attract young people," is so glaring an absurdity that none but a Nonconformist would think of crediting it for a moment. I ask, did they say so? you know that a more wilful perversion of sentiments and words was never made.— These eminent Ministers of Jesus Christ, may, like Wesley, Fletcher, Coke, Benson, Clarke, and multitudes of the most eminent Church, Methodist, and even *respectable* and *real* Nonconformist Ministers, approve of the Liturgy, as an unrivalled composition, and a great help to fervent and enlightened devotion; but that they should wish to have the Liturgy, or even an Organ, or both, merely to please and attract young people, requires but a superficial acquaintance with those heavenly minded and upright men to shew its absurdity and refutation. It is impudently stated too, that the Trustees got up petitions to themselves; the persons here referred to, are Mr. Scarth and Mr. Wm. Smith, I fearlessly refer to these Gentlemen that this is a barefaced falsehood, and I am sure it is a wilful one, as they heard Mr. Scarth deny that he even knew of persons procuring signatures to petitions at the time, and Mr. Smith will as positively deny the meanness with which they insolently charge him of getting up a petition to himself; with respect to the voice of the Society being disregarded, I assert, that the Organ was a popular subject in the Society, at the time, and especially in the Brunswick Congregation.

The repeated story of the Local Preacher being suspended, wants a little explanation. He convened Meetings contrary to Methodist Law and Rule, the consequences of which were fully pointed out to him;

1. By a Local Preacher, at the first Meeting. 2. By Mr. Bunting, at Manchester. 3. By Mr. Stanley. 4. By Mr. Grindrod. 5. By the private remonstrances of Friends.

But when charged with it at the Quarter day, with the greatest effrontery he said, that he "gloried in it," and declared he "would repeat the offence," &c. He was tried, and pleaded GUILTY, and now we are told he was suspended in opposition to the wishes of his brethren, let it be remembered that those "Brethren," were accomplices,—but Mr. Grindrod was too well acquainted with British and Methodistic law to suffer Criminals to be both Judge and Jury; he therefore as chairman, passed sentence upon him.

Then we are told how the Local Preachers suspended their labours; I say, thank God for that; the Local Preachers have repented of that most deeply since; I recollect meeting one of them the day after suspension, and with "triumph in his eyes" he exclaimed, in what a situation will the Superintendent be placed next week, there are from 65 to 70 of us, who will not preach on Sunday, the Congregations will be destitute, the Stewards will pour in from all parts of the Circuit in the course of the week, and then what an uproar and distress there will be; but Sunday arrived, many went to their own, and to several of the vacated places, so that very few Congregations were neglected; and a general burst of contempt and indignation was expressed against these troublers of Israel, who, regardless of their duty, and the welfare of souls, had thus deserted their posts, after this, all the places were supplied, and since then, have been well supplied, and nearly as many more could be supplied at the present time; here, the Lords out of lawn sleeves, lost their sovereignty, and this, as it really was, they consider one of their most foolish acts.

But to wade line after line, and paragraph after paragraph is needless. This document addressed to the Travelling Preachers is the death blow of Leeds Nonconformity, it evidently utters the groans and sighs of one departing this life, but with the distorted features of one dreadfully convulsed, it seems to utter a curse, and then will die in peace.

The Travelling Preachers are requested to notice the following things:

- I. That Meetings of either Trustees, Leaders, or Local Preachers ought to be held without the sanction of the Superintendent, and where he does not preside.
- II. That the members of one Circuit may correspond with those of another on the affairs of Methodism,—and if we understand this, as exemplified in our Barr-ites at Leeds, they may interfere too, as the people of the Leeds West Circuit did with the East Circuit respecting an Organ and other matters.
- III. That at present, (as every Travelling Preacher knows,) persons are only tried *at*, and not *by*, a Leaders' Meeting, and that in opposition to *all* the Leaders, the Preacher pronounces persons guilty or innocent, and punishes them as he pleases. I wonder whether the Travelling Preachers will marvel most at the ignorance or impudence of this part of the "Brief Statement."
- IV. Methodism is contrary to REASON, the BRITISH CONSTITUTION, and the NEW TESTAMENT.
- V. That the Methodists ought to inquire how they can support Methodism as a "system which is not sanctioned in the New Testament."

I should think they ought not to support it at all, if contrary to either the Old or New Testament, and without much "serious consideration," they

should at once renounce it and deeply humble themselves before God, for having supported that which was in opposition to his word. But a word my nonconforming brethren, I admire your attachment to *Reason*, the *British Constitution*, and the *New Testament*. But would it not place Methodism and the Conference on a plan exactly consistent with them all, if at the next Conference a resolution should be come to,—viz. 1. That we censure the Trustees of the Brunswick Chapel at Leeds, for erecting an Organ there, and resolve that, that Organ be removed out of the said Chapel. 2. That without any further inquiry, the whole of the people called Nonconformists be restored to the Society, and reinstated in the official situations they previously held. I say, should these laws pass without any inquiry, then Conference, consisting of "*Travelling Preachers only*," might "*close their doors*" "and make laws at their own will and pleasure." All would be *British*, and *Reasonable*, and *Scriptural*, and like a furious Patriot, who is generally pacified with a pension, they would be satisfied with obtaining a victory. The Nonconformists have now avowed themselves, and Methodism is to be new modelled, and remodelled upon the plan of the "*New Itinerancy*," and delegates to be admitted into Conference. I should not be surprised if this is designed to beg admission into the New Methodist body; or perhaps may be preparatory to an Itinerancy of their own, certainly Methodism must be greatly changed if this plan be adopted. But should Conference restore these democrats to their deserted posts, especially at their sovereign mandate, joined with all the scattered disaffected Methodists in the kingdom, they would find that where they had gained one friend, they had lost twenty; as there would be a general dissatisfaction and desertion of the real and sound members of the Societies; for any constitutional change in Methodism, especially to suit the disaffected (who appear so entirely ignorant of its real nature,) is what they would not submit to, but by hundreds and thousands would peaceably withdraw, after having used their efforts, that our present unrivalled constitution might be continued.

It is evident, that notwithstanding the advertisements and puffs in the newspapers, &c. of 28 Local Preachers, 7 Exhorters, 56 Leaders, and 900 Members, and the mighty stir, the opening of a small Chapel, one Sunday much crowded, and the *open* Love-feast the next Sunday at which it was filled, has made, that Nonconformity is in a declining state; this the ring-leaders of it see, and wish to make a mighty boast to attract a little public attention. All the sanction that they can boast of from christians of other denominations, is, that a respectable individual, who sold them their Chapel at a good price, took a box at its opening, and collected for them!!

As was most strikingly observed by Mr. Keeling, in his first answer to their various Newspaper attacks,—without a head and without an object



they cannot continue; strife and contention, and quarrels must soon ensue among those dissatisfied and headstrong individuals, who all wish to rule, and though they "dinna like kings, yet would a' be kings." Besides, the real scarcity of preaching talent must soon leave the congregations dissatisfied: These, with various other considerations, not only make it probable, but certain, that when the charms of novelty cease to attract, theirs is a lost cause. One thing we certainly lament, that such numbers should have been practised upon by them, not that we wish to have all their members, any more than the ring-leaders, *conform* to the old discipline and doctrine,—there are the discontented, and formalists, and backsliders, the pert and the proud, these are in their *right* and their *own* place; but amongst the numbers are many sincere christians, these we trust will see through the hoax; the ambition of these "Rabbi's" will become apparent, and they will return and be kindly received by their brethren;—yes, their faithful and affectionate Ministers will kindly receive and bid them welcome,—their brethren in Christ will bid them welcome. And as Methodists, they shall still hear those doctrines, and be subject to the silken cords of that discipline, (instead of their present fetters of iron,) and enjoy those privileges, which now astonish the world, and shall finally convert it. Come my brethren, let our feet still carry us to the same sanctuaries; let our voices again mingle in united addresses to the throne of the heavenly grace; let us still tell each other what God has done for our souls. When you think of the rich pastures which you have left, and contrast them with the comparatively barren wilderness you now wander in, where you may in the language of lamentation, say, "no man careth for my soul," you often heave a sigh, and say, "O that it was with me as in days that are past." Well, make a vigorous effort, escape from those whose counsel has led you astray; and without upbraiding, without inquiry, with the only assurance that you love us, and will be one with us, here, in the name of the whole Wesleyan Methodist Church, I offer you the right hand of fellowship. We will not upbraid, we often look after you and say, "what have these sheep done," that they are to be thus deluded and starved; but we rejoice that you are not scattered in the dark and cloudy day, that you are not lost in the world; no thanks to those seducers of you and destroyers of many, who have their garments steeped in the blood of souls. May God have mercy on them, and grant to them repentance unto life.

The foolish Letter to the Preachers in which they are represented as the dupes of Mr. Bunting, is an insult to those venerable men who compose the Conference, especially his Seniors; What! was the venerable Benson the slave of his young Friend? What! are all our veterans in the gospel, in our day, those who have spent a long life in the Itinerancy, and whose praises are in all our churches, whose talents and piety are admired by thousands and tens of thousands, are all these Mr. Bunting's

creatures and slaves? and if the old men are so enslaved where has the spirit of Englishmen gone, when it forsook all the young ones, that none dare approach this Tyranny, and slay this Goliath,—But witnesses should come into court with clean hands; the men whose clamour and insolence and rage, and ignorance so disgraced them and produced such excitement at their illegal Meetings, and of whom a sensible person who was present said, he believed that if a resolution had been proposed to excommunicate the Conference, it would have been generally adopted; these are not the men to judge for Conference.

It is remarkable that this Conference Tyranny is somewhat moveable; all the Preachers are Tyrants, and their Tyranny is to be resisted manfully; anon, they are slaves, and Mr. Bunting is the slave driver general; and now these Tyrant haters, waving the cap of liberty, are offering freedom to an enslaved Conference; first they call upon Conference to give liberty to the people, this cry is disregarded; so they put the Boot on the other leg, and now are as loudly calling upon the people to give liberty to the Conference. I should suppose the Preachers may see here the snare laid for them, and will not be readily disposed to walk into it, they are required to say in effect, “we have sacrificed the interests of the people,—of Methodism,—of the cause of God,” to gain favour with Mr. Bunting, to obtain good Circuits, and to avoid (elegantly expressed) the “back settlements,” we have been men destitute of honour, of principle, and virtue, and been governed only by interest and fear;—Oh Leeds Radicals, this will not do,—indeed it will not!

Leaving Mr. Bunting and the Conference to settle disputes which never existed, and Conference and the people to throw off chains they never carried, I exhort the peaceable and well disposed of you, my brethren, to cast off the galling yoke of your despotic tyrants, and return to your old friends, and affectionate brethren.

I am,

Yours, for Christ's sake.

A WESLEYAN METHODIST.

P. S. As our issuers of the “Brief Statement” have given us two Scriptures which are applicable to themselves; I will propose to their consideration two others, the first \* refers to three men, who said to the Leaders of God's Israel, “ye take too much upon you,” and on whom the judgments of God were signally exerted, and the other † is that which bids us “MARK them which cause divisions and offences. I make no comment, but fervently pray that God would have mercy on those who dare *wilfully* and *wickedly* to make schisms in the Church of God.

\* Numb. xvi. 3.

† Rom. xvi. 17.

